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Friday, June 5, 2015

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Action Item Calendar

Today (June 5): Preliminary [CEIS data](#) due

Today (June 5): School [Health](#) report due

Today (June 5): Preliminary [Homeless](#) and Title I files due

Today (June 5): [Disproportionality](#) Performance Report due

Wednesday (June 10): Teacher roster verifications (see [below](#))

June 16: Preliminary [CTE](#) collection due

June 17: [CEIS Report](#) due

June 19: [Homeless, Title I, EIS](#) collections due

June 24: Principals to sign off on [rosters](#)

June 30: [Dual-enrollment](#) polices completed

June 30: [Preschool](#) Performance Report due

June 30: Final [CTE](#) collection due

July 1: [CRP](#) due

July 10: [Educator-evaluation](#) reports due

July 15: [Special Education](#) Performance Report due

July 15: [Housing Aid](#) forms due

Note from Commissioner Gist

1. Personal note from Commissioner Gist

Sad as I am to do so, the time has come for me to say good-bye to you and to so many treasured friends, colleagues, and fellow-educators and across Rhode Island. I can only say to you that these past six years have been perhaps the most important years of my adult life. Together, we have met so many challenges. We have endured some adversity of course, but we have also enjoyed many moments of joy, pride, and accomplishment. I truly believe

that, through our work toward transforming education, we have improved the lives of thousands of Rhode Islanders and we have made a great contribution toward improving the economic and social well-being of our state.

I admire you and respect you for all that you do for your students, your teachers and others on your team, and your community. Over the course of our many meetings – through your association, during my visits to your schools, through many task forces and working groups, and in more informal settings – I have learned so much from you about what it takes to be the leader of an excellent school system. I will be thinking about you often as I join your ranks as the superintendent of schools in my home town, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

This marks a time of transition for all of us. Five years ago, we put in place our strategic plan for 2010-2015, and I am proud to say that we have fulfilled virtually all of the strategies set forth in the plan. (The RIDE team is preparing a close-out report on this plan, which should be ready later this month.) Now, we are soon to present a draft of a 2015-2020 strategic plan to the Board of Education for review and approval. The new plan will be equally ambitious and will position Rhode Island well to be a leading state when it comes to public education in the 21st century. I am confident that you and the next Education Commissioner will continue to move forward with enthusiasm, wisdom, and dedication – always keeping in mind the best interest of Rhode Island students.

As I leave Rhode Island, I am excited about taking on new responsibilities and meeting new challenges. I know that your leadership will inspire me every day, and I know that I will always remember the work we have done, the friendships we have

forged, and the thousands of Rhode Islanders who believe in our children, our schools, and our future.

From RIDE

Educator Recognition:

2. North Smithfield reading specialist named 2016 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year

In a surprise ceremony yesterday at the North Smithfield Elementary School, a reading specialist and literacy coach, Tracy L. Lafreniere, was named the 2016 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year.

Mrs. Lafreniere, who has spent her entire teaching career of 17 years to date at the North Smithfield Elementary School, now becomes a candidate for the 2016 National Teacher of the Year.

“I never so much aspired to become a teacher but rather I was born knowing I was going to be one,” Mrs. Lafreniere wrote in her Teacher of the Year application. “Teaching struggling readers is both my greatest challenge and my greatest accomplishment. Teaching a child to be a reader changes who they are, and that is an impact that lasts a lifetime.”

“As a mom, I know how important it is to get young kids off to a great start in school,” said Governor Gina M. Raimondo. “Tracy has set countless Rhode Island children up for continued success by devoting her career to working with struggling readers in the early grades. I commend her for her service and for setting such a wonderful example for other teachers in Rhode Island.”

“Gina and I start each day by reading with our kids,” said First Gentleman Andy Moffit, who participated in the ceremony. “It’s so important for all kids to have family members and caring teachers like Tracy in their lives so that they have every opportunity to succeed. We are so grateful to Tracy and her fellow teachers for all they do for Rhode Island kids.”

“Tracy Lafreniere, our newest Rhode Island Teacher of the Year, inspires her students to love reading, helps them overcome their reading difficulties, and, importantly, enables each student to grow in confidence and self-esteem,” said Barbara Cottam, Chair of the Board of Education. “As Teacher of the Year, Tracy will share with teachers throughout the state her enthusiasm and creativity for building a strong reading foundation, and I’m certain she will inspire her fellow teachers to do their best, as she does for her students.”

“Tracy Lafreniere is a teacher who by all accounts is completely devoted to her profession and to her students,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Her colleagues respect her, and they turn to her for advice and for ideas. She is a champion of innovative teaching methods, such as the Tail Wagging Tutors service dogs who come to school to inspire reluctant readers. Tracy brings joy and a spirit of fun to the classroom, and I know she will represent Rhode Island well as our next Teacher of the Year.”

“As an educator who works with beginning readers, Tracy Lafreniere knows the importance of early-childhood education,” said Mary Ann Snider, Chief of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness at RIDE. “She has said that as Teacher of the Year she would like to work to expand opportunities for our youngest learners so that all children enter first grade with a

strong foundation. All of us at RIDE look forward to working with Tracy over the next year in our on-going efforts to enhance the teaching profession and to transform education.”

Mrs. Lafreniere, who lives in Providence, holds a bachelor’s degree from Rhode Island College and a master’s degree in education from Lesley University.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Mrs. Lafreniere serves on the executive board of the Rhode Island Writing Project, she is one of the Common Core Ambassadors for the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE), she is the co-chair of the School Improvement Team at the North Smithfield Elementary School, and she is an adjunct professor in the Graduate Literacy Clinic at Providence College.

Board of Education:

3. Student Advisory Council convenes, elects officers

The Rhode Island Student Advisory Council convened for its initial meeting on Monday (June 1, 2015) and elected officers, including a chairperson who will serve as a nonvoting member on the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Student Advisory Council elected Colby M. Anderson, a sophomore at East Greenwich High School, as chairperson. The Student Advisory Council also elected Lexus Fernandez, of Mount Pleasant High School (Providence), as vice-chair and Vivian Tian, of Barrington High School, as secretary.

The Student Advisory Council consists of one elected representative from each public high school in Rhode Island. Its

purpose is to provide advice from students to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

“I believe we should not settle for ‘good enough’ for students of Rhode Island,” Colby Anderson said. “We have been given the opportunity to be part of the process of determining what is in the best interest of students. Through hard work and determination, we can ensure that we and future generations get the world-class education we all deserve.”

“The student voice should always be a part of the conversation when we discuss education policies and priorities, so I wholeheartedly welcome the Student Advisory Council chair, Colby Anderson, who will join us at the table,” said Barbara S. Cottam, Chair of the Board of Education. “I know that students, teachers, parents, and Board members alike all want to develop and support a great system of public education in Rhode Island, and I look forward to working with the Student Advisory Council to work toward that goal.”

The Student Advisory Council is established by state law: RIGL 16-60-2(c).

Educator Evaluations:

4. RIDE surveying support professionals regarding evaluations; superintendents asked to notify support professionals of survey

The end-of-year support professionals evaluation survey is now open. Feedback collected through this survey will help RIDE to identify the successes and challenges during full implementation and to guide continued improvements. The survey is intended for

all Rhode Island support professionals, regardless of which specific evaluation system is being implemented.

The survey is available at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/eoyssp>

We are asking all superintendents and heads of school to share this survey link with their support professionals. The deadline for completing the survey is Wednesday, **July 1**.

Early Learning:

5. Exceed recognizes 32 public preschool programs for BrightStars participation

Congratulations to the public-school preschool programs who have received a rating or have applied to receive a rating in the BrightStars quality-rating system! We are excited to see the following programs committed to continuous quality improvement by enrolling in the Rhode Island quality-improvement system:

- Bristol Warren: Hugh Cole School;
- Cranston: Early Childhood Center and the Garden City, Glen Hills, Orchard Farms, and Stone Hill Schools;
- Central Falls: Captain G. Harold Hunt School;
- Coventry: Blackrock, Hopkins Hill, and Washington Oak Schools;
- East Providence: Alice M. Waddington School;
- Exeter-West Greenwich: Mildred E. Lineham School;
- Johnston: Graniteville School;

- Lincoln: Northern Lincoln Elementary School;
- Newport: Claiborne Pell annex at the John F. Kennedy School;
- North Kingstown: Fishing Cove Elementary School;
- North Providence: Greystone and Centredale Elementary Schools;
- Providence: Anthony Carnevale, Asa Messer, Charles N. Fortes, and Pleasant View Elementary Schools;
- South Kingstown: South Kingstown Integrated Preschool;
- Warwick: Drum Rock Early Childhood Center;
- West Warwick: Greenbush, Maisie E. Quinn, and Wakefield Hills Elementary Schools; and
- Westerly: Babcock Hall, Bradford Elementary School, Grow & Seek Early Childhood, and Westerly Public Schools.

In addition, we would like to recognize the Town of New Shoreham for supporting all preschool students in the community within the BrightStars-rated Block Island Early Learning Center.

We also want to recognize the following programs that have applied and are waiting for their official star rating:

- East Greenwich: Meadowbrook Farms School; and
- Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

These 32 preschool programs represent more than 50 percent of the total public-school preschool programs in Rhode Island. Through the Exceed initiative, these public-school preschool programs have received \$451,994 in program quality-improvement grants and \$75,000 in grant funds for facility improvements, they have received professional development for more than 100 teachers regarding the Rhode Island Early Learning

and Development Standards, and they have received six Fun Family Activity mini-grants.

All school districts have accessed Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) at the state rate to help them implement a formative-assessment system across all preschool classrooms; programs seeking the highest rating under BrightStars framework or Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Approval will need to implement a valid and reliable formative assessment system, such as TSG.

As we wrap up our final year of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant, we are eager to provide resources, both financial and programmatic, to all public-school programs. These resources are intended to advance schools along the program-quality continuum by increasing or maintaining their rating, helping their staff meet the Rhode Island Workforce Knowledge and Competencies, and improving effective teaching practices of their staff members.

We have contacted the following districts to discuss their plans for participating in BrightStars, and we look forward to their future participation in the Rhode Island quality-improvement system:

- Barrington: Primrose Hill School;
- Bristol Warren: Hugh Cole School;
- Burrillville: Austin T. Levy School;
- Central Falls: Margaret I. Robertson School;
- Chariho: Hope Valley and Richmond Elementary Schoos;
- Cumberland: Cumberland Preschool Center;
- Glocester: West Glocester Elementary School;
- Jamestown: Jamestown School – Melrose;

- Middletown: Aquidneck School and Newport Early Learning Center;
- Narragansett: Narragansett Elementary School;
- North Smithfield: North Smithfield Elementary School;
- Pawtucket: Fallon Memorial and Francis J. Varieur Schools;
- Portsmouth: Melville Elementary School;
- Scituate: Clayville Elementary School;
- Smithfield: Anna M. McCabe School;
- Tiverton: Fort Barton and Pocasset Schools; and
- Woonsocket: Governor Aram J. Pothier School.

For more information about BrightStars, grant opportunities, and the Rhode Island early-childhood commitment, visit exceed.ri.gov.

Data Collections:

6. Teacher roster verification deadline extended to Wednesday (June 10) – Action Item

Several LEAs have requested that the teacher roster verification deadline be extended to next week. Therefore, we have extended the deadline for teacher roster verification from today (June 5) to **Wednesday** (June 10). Consequently, the principal roster verification will open on Thursday (June 11).

If you have any questions please input a ticket to the help desk at <https://support.ride.ri.gov/>

Digital Learning:

7. RIDE announces two upcoming digital-learning opportunities

Through the Rhode Island Digital Learning Consortium: Working Together to Lead our Digital Transformation, RIDE is partnering with LEAS and organizations to provide professional learning opportunities to support educators and school leaders in the digital transition.

Save the date for two upcoming events:

- Google Summer Institute: Session 1 (July 27 through July 31) and Session 2 (August 3 through August 7); and
- Innovation Powered by Technology Conference: Accelerating Personalization (October 17).

More information about the Digital Learning Consortium can be found on the RIDE website, at:

<http://ride.ri.gov/DigitalLearningConsortium>

Reports:

8. Diplomas Count recognizes Rhode Island for efforts to help students with disabilities

The annual Diplomas Count publication, which Education Week released yesterday, recognizes Rhode Island for our multi-agency efforts to help students with disabilities lead productive and rewarding lives.

We are very pleased that the report, “Next Steps: Life after special education,” sites Rhode Island as its example of initiatives “under way to make the transition from school to work easier for youths with disabilities and their families.” The report notes that last year

“Rhode Island signed a first-of-its-kind consent decree ... to bolster supports for students and adults with developmental disabilities.”

The report quotes Jocelyn Samuels, acting assistant attorney general for the civil rights division of the U.S. Department of Justice, saying that Rhode Island can serve as a “national leader in the movement to bring people with disabilities out of segregated work settings and into typical jobs in the community at competitive pay.”

This report also recognizes that Rhode Island – like all states – has a gap between the graduation rate for all students (currently 81 percent) and the graduation rate for students with disabilities (60 percent). Nationally, this graduation-rate gap ranges from 3 points (in Alabama) to 53 points (in Mississippi), with our 21-point gap at about the national media. We have made progress in improving our graduation rates for all students and for students with disabilities, but the gap between all students and students with disabilities remains large.

Diplomas Count is available here:

www.edweek.org/go/dc15.

9. Report cites Rhode Island for making broadband access widely available in schools

A report released this week on digital learning cites Rhode Island as one of five leading states in “making broadband Internet access widely available in schools.” The report, “State Digital Learning Exemplars: Highlights from states leading change through policies

and funding,” is from The William and Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation. You can access the report here:

http://www.setda.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/DigitalLearningExemplars_June2015.pdf

Charter Public Schools:

10. Nardelli to retire, Groves named executive director of League of Charter Schools

The Rhode Island League of Charter Schools announced this week that Executive Director Stephen A. Nardelli will retire from his long-standing career in education on June 30. His career has included work as a public school teacher and coach, serving as Executive Director of Legislative Relations at RIDE, and serving as the first full-time executive director of the league, helping expand the role of charter public schools in the Rhode Island public education system.

Timothy Groves, former development officer at the Rhode Island Foundation, attorney at Barton Gilman LLC, and co-founder and vice president at Schoolyard Inc., began his new role as executive director on June 1, and will work through the month with Nardelli on a successful transition.

Groves said: “Rhode Island’s charter public schools have a vital role to play in our state's system of public education. Since their inception, our charter schools have spurred innovation and developed scalable strategies for improving teaching and learning in Rhode Island. I am eager to collaborate constructively with

educational leaders and stakeholders throughout the state to enhance and extend the positive impact of the amazing work that League members are doing every day.”

From the U.S. Department of Education

11. School leaders encouraged to promote summer-meals programs

Please see this letter from Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture:

Dear Colleague:

Ensuring that America’s children have the proper nutrition to grow up healthy, learn, and reach their full potential is critical for delivering on the American promise of equal opportunity for all. Our nation has a long and impressive history of ensuring that those in need—especially children—have the food they need to thrive. Your leadership is needed to help ensure that children do not go hungry in your community this summer.

During the school year, over 21-million children receive free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch through U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) national school lunch program each day. But, when school is out, many children who rely on these school meals go hungry. USDA’s summer meal programs help children get the nutritious meals they need even when school is not in session. Unfortunately, the summer meal programs reach fewer than 4 million children nationally.

We need your leadership and assistance to let every family whose children and teenagers need meals this summer know how to find a summer meals site in their community. Please help in the following ways:

- *Provide summer meals to children at your schools this summer.* Local schools make great summer meal sites. Children and parents are familiar and comfortable with local schools providing nutritious food in a safe environment. Schools in low-income areas can be summer meal sites and fill an important meal gap for students, even if summer school is not offered at the school. For a comprehensive outreach toolkit, please visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit-summer-meal-sites>.

- *Ask principals, teachers, and staff in your schools to share information about nearby summer meal sites.* Schools communicate regularly and effectively with their students' families. Please encourage them to connect their families with summer meal locations by visiting <http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks> or by calling (866) 3-HUNGRY or (877) 8-HAMBRE.
- *Be a champion in your community.* As a recognized leader, please share with other community leaders the importance of USDA's summer meal programs to ensure children have the resources they need to succeed. Encourage local organizations to become summer meal sponsors or sites. Distribute flyers, postcards, and bookmarks about USDA's summer meal

programs and promote summer meals on your schools' websites and in your schools' e-mails. Digital and printable summer meals materials can be found at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness>.

To learn more about the USDA summer meal programs, visit:

www.summerfood.usda.gov.

In addition, the Food and Nutrition Service regional office staff is available to provide technical assistance and answer any questions you may have on USDA summer meal programs at the following link:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>.

Thank you, as always, for your dedication and commitment to our children. By working together, we can ensure our children have the food and nutrition they need to grow and succeed.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education

12. Federal funds may be used to support summer learning

Please see this message that U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary Deborah S. Delisle has sent to all chief school officers:

As we approach the end of another school year, I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the hard work that has taken place in states, local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools across the nation this year. You have each done a tremendous amount of work to address your state's most pressing education challenges and to enhance the support to educators and students.

Summer can be a stressful time as families seek to ensure that students stay actively engaged in learning outside of the traditional school year. With this in mind, I am writing to remind you that federal funds may be used to support robust summer learning in a number of programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). In addition, programs supported by other federal legislation, including the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV), the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, also known as Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), may additionally support summer learning opportunities. I encourage you to continue working to ensure that LEAs and schools in your state understand that they may use remaining Fiscal Year 2014 federal funds under these programs for summer learning, and to work in a timely manner with LEAs and schools interested in updating their budgets and plans to use funds for this purpose.

Among the ESEA programs under which opportunities for summer learning are allowable, there are two in which summer learning is a particularly good fit. Title I, Part A (Title I) funds may be used to support a variety of extended learning time (ELT) opportunities for students consistent with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. These opportunities include summer school for eligible students. In particular, Title I funds may be used to support ELT opportunities for all students in Title I schools operating schoolwide programs and for those students identified as most at risk of failing to meet the state's academic achievement standards in Title I schools operating targeted assistance programs. An LEA generally may not use Title I funds to pay for ELT in Title I schools while also using non-Title I funds to support ELT in non-Title I schools. However, an LEA that wants to provide ELT programs *for only low-achieving students* in both its Title I and non-Title I schools may be able to do so, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.79. If an LEA or school wants to provide ELT services that include both academic and non-academic enrichment activities, it might consider using Title I, Part A funds, as appropriate, for the academic component and partnering with community organizations to provide the non-academic activities. Title I funds may also be used for summer activities designed to help prepare eligible students for the upcoming school year. For example, funds might be used for a summer academy to help eligible 8th-grade students transition to high school. Similarly, funds might be used for a summer program to prepare eligible students to succeed in higher-level courses.

Title IV, Part B of the ESEA authorizes the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program, which supports the creation of community learning centers that

provide academic and enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math, offers students a broad array of academic enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs, and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

Under the 21st CCLC program, an eligible entity that has a subgrant from the SEA in its state may be eligible to receive additional funds under the program. As we approach the summer months, a state that has funds remaining from its grant competition(s) may use those remaining funds to expand or enhance current activities or to establish programs in non-participating schools within an LEA that has a 21st CCLC subgrant. States should use program-performance data and other evidence-based practices to develop summer learning programs that would yield measurable results.

If you have any additional questions regarding Title I or the 21st CCLC program, please do not hesitate to contact one of the program officers for your state in the Office of State Support or the Office of Academic Improvement. If you have questions regarding Perkins IV, please contact Edward Smith, in the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) at Edward.Smith@ed.gov. Questions regarding adult education programs under the Workforce Investment Act may be addressed to Christopher Coro, in OCTAE at Christopher.Coro@ed.gov. Questions regarding IDEA may be

addressed to Matthew Schneer, in the Office of Special Education Programs at Matthew.Schneer@ed.gov.

Thank you again for your commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. We look forward to our continued partnership in this critical work.

Sincerely,

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

From other federal agencies

13. High schools encouraged to welcome exchange students

Please see this message from the Youth Programs Division, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, at the U.S. Department of State:

Would you like to have a cross-cultural experience in your community while contributing to improved relations between the United States and other countries?

If so, consider hosting an exchange student sponsored by the U.S. Department of State in your home or school. Each year, almost 2,000 high-school students representing over 50 countries are awarded highly competitive merit-based State Department scholarships to study in the United States for an academic year. These promising young leaders live with American host families across the country, attend high school, and participate in extracurricular and community

service activities. When they return to their home countries, they engage in alumni activities to share what they learned, put their new skills in practice, and maintain their links to the United States as they become leaders in their communities.

The benefits of hosting Department of State-sponsored exchange student go beyond simply welcoming someone new into your family or school and sharing American culture, values, and traditions; when you host an exchange student, you welcome a new culture and language, and all the richness that comes with it into your community, help a young person learn and grow, and create long-lasting relationships and memories. Learn more and fill out an interest form at hosting.state.gov, or email us, at:

youthprograms@state.gov.

Please feel free to share this message with your high schools and with your community.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>